



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Quality Corner	3
From the Forms File	4
From the Hotline	4
Expansion of Community Service Sites	5
State 24-Month Time Limit Tracking Actuate Report	5
NewMMIS: Replacing MassHealth Cards	5
Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Expansion to the Greenfield Housing Authority	6
The Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on SNAP, TAFDC, EAEDC and EA	6
Suspension of the Transportation Assistance Program (TAP)	6
Dates to Remember	6
FYI - Aid Pending Appeal Allowed for Situations that Fall under the Timely Notice Exception Rule	7
FYI - Change to DTA Online	7
FYI - Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage	7
FYI - Overpayment Referrals	8
Do You Know...	8

## From the Commissioner

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to announce that our Department will receive nearly \$7 million over the next two years to hire approximately 100 new staff members to process Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications, provide administrative support, and service center supervision. This funding is a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the Federal Economic Stimulus Package.

These new full-time employees, in conjunction with other efficiencies currently underway, will help to reduce the average SNAP caseload, and make it easier to deliver the high level of customer service our applicants and clients expect. We will be simultaneously making process changes to streamline our operations and increase efficiency.

Our efforts, and each new employee, will provide much-needed relief to our Department. We will begin the hiring process as soon as possible, while continuing to pursue efficiencies in the way we conduct business. The stimulus package provides additional funding for SNAP benefits and other programs, outlined below.

### **Increases to SNAP benefits**

The economic stimulus bill also increases SNAP benefits for most Massachusetts households, totaling more than \$300 million over the next several years. As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, households started receiving an average monthly increase of \$39 (about 18%). Participants in SNAP do not have to do anything to receive these additional funds. In addition to helping individuals and families put food on their tables, this funding will have a significant impact on the Commonwealth: each dollar spent in SNAP benefits generates nearly \$2 in economic activity for our state.

### **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)**

The Commonwealth will receive additional TANF funding based on increases in TANF caseloads and spending. We are awaiting official guidance from the US Administration on Children and Families to determine how much funding will be available and how quickly it will be distributed.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## From the Commissioner (Continued from page 1)

### **Workforce Development**

The stimulus package provides substantial Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding that will help our clients to find jobs. Job training, summer jobs for youth, and assistance for people with disabilities to prepare for employment are included, as well as grants to match unemployed individuals with job openings and community service jobs for older Americans.

### **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

Each SSI participant will receive a one-time payment of \$250. This payment will not be countable as income for any DTA programs.

### **Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG)**

The stimulus bill includes \$1.5 billion for homelessness prevention and re-housing (translating to about \$44.5 million for Massachusetts). Unfortunately, this funding cannot be used for emergency shelter costs – but it can be used for rental assistance, relocation and stabilization, housing search assistance, mediation, credit repair, moving costs, and other activities. We are working with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) to determine how to best utilize these funds.

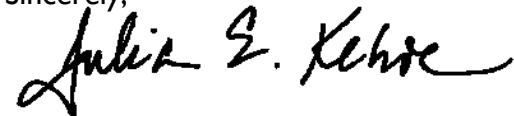
### **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**

For tax years 2009 and 2010, married couples will pay less in taxes and the Earned Income Tax Credit has been expanded to include families with three or more children (currently, the maximum benefit only applies to families with 2 or more children).

We are working diligently to implement appropriate systems changes and to ensure the rapid deployment of stimulus funds. I will keep you updated as plans for new staff and business process changes develop.

As always, thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,



Julia E. Kehoe

## Quality Corner

This month we will review two negative errors (invalid closings and denials) that occurred in NPA cases. The first negative error was caused by a failure to interview and a failure to send a Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI). The second error was caused by the unintentional use of figures on a paystub that were recorded as wages.

### **No Interview or Notice of Missed Interview**

The application for SNAP benefits was received for a household of three. This included the client and two children. The case was subsequently denied for failure to provide verifications. A verification checklist requesting wages, child support income and shelter expense was found in the case record.

Although some work was done on this case, the denial was invalid because there was no evidence in the case record or in BEACON to indicate whether or not the client was interviewed. Also, there was no NOMI to indicate whether or not the client had missed a scheduled interview.

### **What's a Case Manager to Do?**

Clients who cannot be reached by phone must be sent a BEACON-generated appointment letter. If the client misses the scheduled application interview (telephone or face-to-face), a BEACON-generated NOMI must be sent. Case managers must indicate on the BEACON Narratives tab whether or not the client was interviewed by phone. There has been a significant increase in the number of negative errors based on lack of evidence that an interview was scheduled and/or conducted, and whether or not a NOMI was sent. In many instances, a narrative entry addressing the client interview could prevent a negative error. For more information on negative errors, see *Negative Errors and How to Avoid Them* on Policy Online/Job Aids. Other helpful information

regarding SNAP application procedures include Field Operations Memo 2006-30 and Field Operations Memo 2007-16.

### **Wrong Wages**

A SNAP application was received in the TAO for a household of one. The monthly income for this case was earnings of \$911.40 per month verified by paystubs showing gross amounts of \$135.05, \$122.10, \$463.17 and \$121.03. The client also received RSDI of \$812 per month. The application was subsequently denied for income in excess of the program limits for the household size.

QC determined that the SNAP denial was invalid because the case manager used an incorrect amount from one of the paystubs. The amount in question, \$463.17, represented a year-to-date amount and not the client's pay for that particular week. The correct pay for that week was \$95.87. QC recalculated the case using the correct amount and determined that the client was eligible for \$14 in SNAP benefits.

### **What's a Case Manager to Do?**

Case managers must be very careful when extracting information from proofs clients submit. This is especially critical when recording income from paystubs. In this case, an amount of \$463.17 was not representative of the client's earnings since the wages for the other three pay weeks were \$135.05, \$122.10 and \$121.03 respectively. Closer inspection of the paystubs would have revealed the correct amount for that week. If the \$463.17 was correct for that week, the case manager would have had to determine whether the applicant was paid like this every month or whether this paystub was an anomaly that needed to be disregarded.

## From the Forms File

### Revised Form

*MassHealth Card Update Request*

*18-250-0309-05*

*MHCR-1 (Rev. 3/2009)*

The *MassHealth Card Update Request* form has been revised. Refer to Field Operations 2008-29 and Field Operations Memo 2009-16 for more information on the use of this form. Please discard old versions of this form and use the revised version.

---

## From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**.

- Q.** My TAFDC applicant has told me that she is currently on probation. Is she eligible for the TAFDC Program?
- A.** Yes. If otherwise eligible, this applicant may receive TAFDC benefits. However, an individual who violates a condition of probation or parole imposed on or after 9/26/96 is ineligible for the TAFDC Program. Refer to 106 CMR 701.110 for more details.
- Q.** I recently had an EAEDC applicant who was required to wear an electronic monitoring device as a condition of her probation while living in the community. Since this individual is wearing an electronic monitoring device for reasons other than incarceration, is she eligible for EAEDC?
- A.** Yes. If your client is living in the community, has been ordered to wear an electronic monitoring device by her probation or parole officer and is otherwise eligible for EAEDC, then she may qualify for benefits.
- This same principle applies to TAFDC clients. If otherwise eligible, a client ordered to wear an electronic monitoring device by her probation or parole officer may also receive TAFDC benefits.
- Q.** If a client applying for SNAP benefits is wearing an electronic monitoring device can he or she receive benefits?
- A.** Yes. If otherwise eligible, a client living in the community under home detention and wearing an electronic monitoring device may be eligible for SNAP benefits.

## Field Operations Memos

### Expansion of Community Service Sites

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-14

The Department is expanding the number of community service sites to which work program required clients can be referred. On March 2, 2009, the Cash Assistance and Full Engagement (CAFE) Vocational Services Unit (VSU) in Central Office implemented a formalized process for identifying and certifying new community service sites. This memo informs TAO staff about the expansion of community service sites and the process for identifying and certifying sites.

### State 24-Month Time Limit Tracking Actuate Report

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-15

As a tool to better enable TAO staff to track work program participation, a new Actuate report has been created which will help case managers, supervisors and TAO managers monitor their extension caseloads. On March 9, 2009 the “TAFDC State 24-Month Time Limit Tracking” report became available on Actuate.

Having 24-month extension participation data identified on one report will help make it easier for staff to monitor and track clients who are nearing or who have exceeded the 24-month time limit.

This memo provides TAO staff with:

- instructions to access the Actuate report;
- a description of the new Actuate report; and
- scenarios that describe cases that will appear on the Actuate report and whether or not the case manager must review the case.

### NewMMIS: Replacing MassHealth Cards

TAFDC and EAEDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-16

Currently, TAO staff use the *MassHealth Card Update Request* form (MHCR-1)(2/00) to:

- replace MassHealth cards that have been lost or stolen; or
- invalidate MassHealth cards.

Since new MassHealth cards have been issued for NewMMIS, the *MassHealth Card Update Request* form is being replaced to reflect the new card information.

This memo gives TAO staff:

- a copy of the new *MassHealth Card Update Request* form; and
- procedures for filling out the new *MassHealth Card Replacement Request* form.

## Field Operations Memos

### Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Expansion to the Greenfield Housing Authority

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-17

This memo adds the Greenfield Housing Authority to the list of Housing Authorities offering the FSS Program to its tenants. This portion of the DTA/FSS initiative began March 18, 2009 in Greenfield. The existing DTA/FSS initiative continues in the Brockton, Somerville and Framingham Public Housing Authorities. TAO staff must continue to follow procedures in Field Operations Memo 2008-30 A when referring clients to the FSS Program. A list of clients who have been asked to participate will be e-mailed to the Greenfield TAO.

### The Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on SNAP, TAFDC, EAEDC and EA

All

Field Operations Memo 2009-18

This memo informs staff of the impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, also known as the Economic Stimulus Package) and their impact on all programs. This memo discusses:

- the increase in SNAP benefits; including:
  - state letter and mass.gov updates; and
  - notification to clients formerly certified at zero benefit;

- the treatment of a one-time payment of \$250 to recipients of SSI, RSDI, federal veterans benefits and Railroad Retirement benefits;
- the temporary increase in unemployment benefits, a related retroactive payment and their impact on TAFDC, EAEDC, EA and SNAP; and
- other considerations.

### Suspension of the Transportation Assistance Program (TAP)

TAFDC and EAEDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-19

Budget shortfalls in the TAFDC and EAEDC accounts have left the Department without funding for the Transportation Assistance Program (TAP) for the remainder of state fiscal year 2009. This memo informs TAO staff that effective immediately, no TAP referrals to Travelers Aid Family Services should be made by TAO staff until further notice.

### Dates to Remember

**April 13, 2009**

**GIC Annual Enrollment for FY 2010**

This enrollment will run through May 15, 2009.

**April 20, 2009**

**Patriots' Day**

## FYIs

### **Aid Pending Appeal Allowed for Situations that Fall under the Timely Notice Exception Rule**

The Department will allow the continuation of assistance or “aid pending” until a ruling is made by the Division of Hearings (DOH), if a client files an appeal within 10 days from the date of a notice to reduce, suspend or terminate the client’s benefits, even if the notice information is related to certain situations that fall under the Timely Notice Exception rule described in 106 CMR 343.210. However, “aid pending” will not be granted if the notice is related to a change in federal or state law affecting classes of clients, such as lowering or terminating benefits due to reduced or eliminated funding.

If the case reduction, suspension or termination has been released in BEACON, DOH will notify the TAO Appeals Liaison. The TAO Appeals Liaison will instruct the appropriate case manager to reinstate the client’s benefits.

### **Change to DTA Online**

This month, the following change has been made to **DTA Online**:

- A “Job Aid” concerning Veterans’ SNAP Benefits has been added and is accessible through the **Policy Online** side-bar option.

### **Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage**

Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage include:

- the addition of the “SNAP Benefits Are Going Up!” information to the **News & Updates** side-bar option; and
- updates to “DTA Facts and Figures” as well as updates to our caseload information which can be accessed by selecting the appropriate Department program (EAEDC, FS, EA Homeless, SSI, TAFDC) beneath the **Research & Statistics** side-bar option.

*(Continued on page 8)*

**FYIs** (Continued from page 7)**Overpayment Referrals**

When an overpayment is made to a household, regardless of the program (TAFDC, EAEDC, or SNAP) an overpayment referral must be made in the Accounts Receivable (AR) Referral folder of BEACON.

This policy applies to:

- all households currently receiving benefits, regardless of the amount of the overpayment;
- closed households when the overpayment, regardless of the amount, is the result of fraud as determined by the Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI) or an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) as determined by an Administrative Disqualification Hearing (ADH); or
- closed households when the overpayment is the result of an Unintentional Program Violation (UPV) and the overpayment exceeds \$125.00.

(See Field Operations Memo 2006-24 and 106 CMR 706.250, 706.280 and 706.290 (Transitional Cash Assistance) and 106 CMR 364.870 and 367.495 (SNAP).)

The case manager or supervisor must enter the Transitional Assistance Office Group window of BEACON and access the AR Referral Search list by clicking on the appropriate icon. A search can be completed by entering the client's name or SSN. The AR Referral Folder will appear when the case manager clicks on the new or open radio button (See Chapter II-E of *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* for procedures to make an AR Referral.)

---

**Do you know...**

Transitional Assistance Offices (TAOs) and Central Office staff are committed to improving the tools and business practices in local offices across the state. To this end, DTA Cross-Division Teams (Field Operations, Policy and Program Management, Strategic Development and Community Relations, Program Integrity) are working together to improve TAO design, safety and client service. The effort began in earnest this past fall. It includes an initial site assessment and inventory of the TAO tools and practices necessary to better manage our waiting and reception areas. The final stage of this review will be to implement the recommendations identified in the initial survey.

Congratulations to all of you who have helped out with this effort and stay tuned for future updates.

**Diversity Quote**

**"The wave of the future is not the conquest of the world by a single dogmatic creed but the liberation of the diverse energies of free nations and free men."**

**John F. Kennedy**



---

## TAO Meeting Notes